HOW TO LEAD WITH PROVOCATIONS: A TOOLKIT
(Est. duration - 75 mins)

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this provocation consultation is to learn more about the challenge of thinking outside context and experiences when the challenges one faces are adaptive in nature. This method guides a group of peers through a process in which they can examine a provocation based on the principles of adaptive methodologies. We need to think about how to understand the provocation in a better and more innovative way, or to learn from past failures and understand the implications for the future. *The questions below will serve as a guide. You may not be able to answer many of them in the time you have but you can use them as prompts if you get stuck.*

PRELIMINARY ACTIVITIES

a. Create Groups & Assign Roles

Depending on the number of provocations to be assigned, it is important to divide your participants into groups. Once in their groups, participants are advised to assign the following roles:

- **Moderator:** Ensure the group's process works effectively e.g., manages time boundaries, and supports the team in thinking out of the box.
- **Presenters/Panelist:** Assists your team in presenting their diagnosis to the wider group.
- **Timekeeper:** One group member manages the time.
- **Scribe:** Keeps notes of the action items for the presenter.
- **Team mates:** Listen deeply—do not try to "fix" the problems, but listen deeply to one another while also attending to the images, metaphors, feelings and gestures that the story evokes in you.

Goal:
- Generate concrete and innovative ideas for how to respond to the provocation
- Develop a high level of trust and positive energy among the peer group
- Develop the capacity for deep listening

a. Explore the Provocation

Rapid Response: Moderator reads out the provocation blurb (a short description of the provocation) **to group members.** In 1 – 2 minutes, all group members respond to the provocation in a way that is relevant to their work, context and experience.

Scribe takes notes.

b. Gather Information

Expand on the collective experience of the group and the rapid responses to build an understanding of the complexities surrounding the provocation to gather information.

Goal:
- Understand the provocation and the complexities surrounding it.
- Gather information to help conduct a diagnostic brainstorm in the next phase.

Guide Questions:
- Do you agree or disagree with the provocation?
- Are there tensions, contradictions, or conflicts?
- What might the provocation look like (a scenario, to stakeholders etc.)?
- What are the perspectives of people including those in authority, influencers, implementers and users (think losses and gains)?
- What about this provocation do people tend to avoid? Fear? Ignore?
- What is actually at stake if the provocation is negative or positive?
- What makes this provocation challenging to diagnose?

c. DiagnosetheProvocation

Interpret the provocation dynamics, offer alternative interpretations (*not solutions*), and illuminate possible new ways to understand the case. Apply your information and 'diagnose' the provocation. What are the influencing factors, challenges and barriers, impact, and unknowns?

Goal:
- Apply the information gathered and 'diagnose' the provocation.
- Understand the influencing factors, challenges and barriers, impact, and unknowns.

Guide Questions:

• What is at stake?
• What might be some of the hidden or underlying issues that influence/influenced this provocation?
• What do you think is/was the real adaptive challenge?
• What makes/made this challenge hard to face, in terms of potential losses, for various stakeholders?
• What **work avoidance** patterns might be/have been operating to maintain equilibrium?
• What options are/were possible or impossible?
• How you as a creative and cultural practitioner contribute to the problem, if any?
• What information is missing or do we not know?
• What assumptions is the group making that ought to be tested out?

Diagnosis Table

Provocation:	
Influencing factors	**Challenges and Barriers**
Negative or Positive Impact	**What are the 'Unknowns'**

d. Create your Future scenarios

As a group, decide if you want to present your evolved provocation as a "problem statement", a revised provocation, or use storytelling to share a possible future.

Goal:
• Offer and imagine possible new initiatives, smart risks, and experiments to try to move the provocation forward.

THE PRESENTATION

Finally, the presenter reviews the scribes notes and future scenario in preparation for the group presentation.